Much of this feverish impatience would no doubt have been dissipated if McClellan had seen fit to organize an expedition for the reduction of one or more of the Confederate batteries on the lower Potomac, and, by taking every possible pains to provide for all contingencies, entrusting its conduct to one of his best officers, and securing the always ready and efficient co-operation of the navy, have rendered its successful accomplishment as certain as was in the nature of things possible. One other thing, too, he should have done; he should have taken Norfolk, a perfectly practicable thing to do, taking into account its distance from Richmond, and the fact that the Federal command of the sea would have enabled the General-in-chief to concentrate a large force in its immediate vicinity in a very few days. This operation should have been attempted for the purpose, among others, of preventing the Confederates from building any iron-clad vessels of war, such as, it was rumored in Washington, were, in the autumn of 1861, then under construction in the Gosport navy-yard. But General McClellan would not undertake these expeditions. He insisted on keeping his army perfectly idle, and he felt himself obliged to maintain a studied and absolute reti-

cence respecting his future plans. It was inevitable that the confidence of the public in him should decline, and that the President and Cabinet should fall into an attitude of antagonism towards a general who manifested so little enterprise and maintained so impenetrable a reserve.

During the illness of the General-in-chief, President